A-not-A Questions

* Tag
* Interrogative
* A-not-A
* Yes/No
* Alternative

王建明

A-not-A is one of the five question types in the Chinese language

In A-not-A questions, the “A” stands for “affirmative;” therefore, A-not-A means

Affirmative-not-Affirmative “affirmative” almost always refers to a verb or an adjective.

1.

V-Not-V

A-not-A questions can ask whether or not a verb is being done.

ex: 王朋去不去? Is Wang Peng going or not?

2.

A-not-A questions can ask whether or not someone or something is an adjective.

ex: 王朋高不高? Is Wang Peng tall or not?

Adj.-Not-Adj.

3.

V-Not-VO

When asking whether or not someone is doing a transitive verb, you include the object the verb refers to after the 2nd verb.

ex: 王朋高不高? Is Wang Peng tall or not?

没有-méi yŏu

没-méi

不-bù

Statements showing negation using 不 When one wants to show non-occurrence, Remember from Level 1: 没

demonstrate a permanent state. they use 没instead of 不to negate the cannot negate any verb buy有。

therefore, “李友不喝酒” means verb. Therefore, “李友没喝酒” means It may seem peculiar, then, that it

Li You doesn’t drink alcohol. Li You has not drunk alcohol. precedes 喝in the previous example.

So, when one wants to ask whether So, when one wants to ask whether This does make sense, though, because

Li You ever drinks alcohol, he asks Li You has drunk alcohol, he asks the 没is short for 没有。Therefore,

“李友喝不喝酒?” “李友喝没喝酒?” “李友没有喝酒” also means Li You

has not drunk anything.

Di-Syllabic Verbs

If a verb is disyllabic, it

can either be a Verb-Object combination

or merely a 2-syllable verb.

V-O Combo

吃饭 – (chīfàn; to eat)

看书 – (kànsh; to read)

聊天 – (liáotiān; to chat)

回家 – (huíjiā; return home)

打球 – (dáqiú; play ball)

听音乐 – (tīng yīnyuè; listen to music)

In V-O combos, you ask A-not-A

questions using V-N-V-O.

ex: 打不打球？- Do you play ball or not?

看不看书？- Do you read books or not?

吃没吃饭？- Have you eaten or not?

听没听音乐？- Have you listened

to music or not?

Common Expressions Instead of using V-没-V to

In some common phrases, the question non-occurrence, you can second verb in that question is omitted also use 有-没-有-V.

The most famous example of ex: 李友喝没喝酒?

this is “你吃饭了没有?” and

“Have you eaten or not?” (p. 131) 李友有没有喝酒? This is an abbreviation for both ask if Li You has drunk alcohol.

“你吃饭了没有吃饭?”

Sources: Notes; Textbook; L5 Review PDF; *“An empiricized investigation on the distribution of A-not-A questions in Chinese literary texts”* by Jun Da – Middle Tennessee State University

Summary

A-not-A questions are one of the most difficult aspects of Chinese grammar because of all the different ways they can be formed. To me, the easiest way to remember the structure is:

Predicate (V/Adj.) – 不/没 – Predicate

Questions

1.) When you form A-not-A questions, should you include 了 ?

2.) Can the “affirmtative” be anything other than a verb or adjective? Can it be a modal?

Do you want to work or not?

VV Verbs

工作 – (gōngzuò; to work)

介绍 – ( jièshào; to introduce)

认识 – (rènshi; to know)

可以 – (kĕyĭ; can)

With VV verbs, you have two ways to ask A-not-A questions.



1.) VV-N-VV

2.) V-N-VV

ex: 工不工作?

工作不工作?

可不可以?

可以不可以?

Can or cannot?